NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

September 5-8

Compiled by: Aleksandre Davitashvili Date: September 9, 2019

Occupied Regions

- ❖ Abkhazia Region
- 1. Giorgi Gakharia: It is too early to speak about other formats with Russia unless existing is expired, we should activate direct ties with Ossetian and Abkhazian fellow citizens

"First of all, we must use the maximum capabilities of these formats and using them effectively. As for direct ties with our Ossetian and Abkhaz fellow citizens, we should activate everything related to public diplomacy. The relevant agencies here are working effectively and their results should be even more effective and efficient.

We must not forget that today we are not able to implement effective control over these occupied territories and in terms of security when talking about bilateral relations, close ties in different directions, we must also take this into account", – Giorgi Gakharia said (1TV, September 7, 2019).

- Tskhinvali Region (so called South Ossetia)
- 2. U.S. Ambassador to OSCE: U.S. continues to monitor reports of military buildup by Russia near Administrative Boundary Line and will expose violations of Georgia's sovereignty

The United States calls on Russia to withdraw troops from Georgia. US Ambassador to the OSCE James S. Gilmore made the regarding statement during his speech at the meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna.

"The United States fully supports Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, as well as Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. Russia's efforts to rewrite historical facts and create a false narrative again undermine efforts to resolve the conflict, and will not succeed", – US diplomat stated (1TV, September 6, 2019).

❖ Foreign Affairs

3. Hungarian President: As in past, so in future, we support Georgia's aspiration to join NATO

"It is a great honor for me to be here. I am the first Hungarian President to pay an official visit to Tbilisi. Hungary, as before, intends to support Georgia's aspiration to NATO integration in the future. We know that a new commission has been set up and I hope the commissioners will provide new impetus to this issue. At the meeting, we also spoke about tourism. We know that Wizz Air started implementing direct flights between Georgia and Hungary three or four years ago, which is a huge contribution in terms of tourism. I hope that Hungarian people will be more interested in visiting Georgia, testing the Georgian

wine and cuisine", – President of Hungary pointed out after the meeting with Salome Zurabishvili (1TV, September 5, 2019).

4. Criminal gang made up of Georgians revealed in UK

A criminal gang made up of Georgians has been identified in the United Kingdom, which was smuggling migrants into the UK via Ireland in exchange for money.

As British edition Daily Mail reports, the leader of the gang I.D., 35, has been jailed for five years and 8 months.

According to Daily Mail, I.D. also smuggled several members of his own family into the country using the same ferry route from Dublin to Holyhead in Wales (1TV, September 5, 2019).

❖ Internal Affairs

5. Vakhtang Gomelauri: We plan to develop mobile app enabling citizens to report traffic rule violations to police

"In order to improve the administration of traffic rules, we plan to develop a mobile application that will enable any citizen to record and report the facts of violations of the established traffic rules to the patrol police, "- stated Vakhtang Gomelauri (1TV, September 5, 2019).

6. Lawyer of TBC Bank founders prepare lawsuit for European Court

Lawyers of TBC Bank founders Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze are preparing a lawsuit to file to the European Court, – English and French lawyers said at a news conference held together with Georgian lawyers of Khazaradze and Japaridze.

In London, where the case of seizure of accounts has been appealed, Khazaradze's interests will be defended by Steven Kay, who assesses the legal situation around TBC Bank as political revenge (1TV, September 6, 2019).

7. Giorgi Gakharia to UNM: I'm not going anywhere, I'll put an end to you, Georgian population and voters will put an end to you

I'm not going anywhere, I'll put an end to you, Georgian population and voters will put an end to you, – the candidate for the post of Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Gakharia addressed the members of the United National Movement during the meeting at the parliament today.

"I would like to emphasize that what happens here shows the face of the National Movement – lies, slander, when the truth is replaced, when the simulated reality is used for manipulations. You were doing this for nine years and still continue. I'm not going anywhere, I'll put an end to you, the population of Georgia and the voter will put an end to you. You are an ordinary street opposition and in 2020 you will remain in the street, " – Giorgi Gakharia said (1TV, September 6, 2019).

8. General Prosecutor's Office filed new charges against Nika Gvaramia

As the statement released by the Prosecutor's Office notes, Gvaramia has been charged for large-scale embezzlement of the property of Rustavi 2 broadcasting company, which he committed in agreement with a group, by abusing his power, as well as for commercial bribery and production/use of counterfeit official documents, which caused significant damage.

In addition to Nika Gvaramia, charges were filed against Kakha Damenia, the former financial director of the channel and Zurab Iashvili, director of Intermedia Plus (1TV, September 6, 2019).

9. NGOs call on MPs not to vote for Giorgi Gakharia's candidacy

As the joint statement of NGOs reads, unless the responsibility of Interior Minister into the violent disperse of June 20-21 rally is clearly established, Parliament should refrain from appointing Gakharia to the post of the head of the executive government. The statement notes that otherwise the parliament would promote polarization and contribute to civil confrontation in the country.

The joint statement is signed by: Open Society Georgia Foundation, Human Rights Center, Green Alternative, EU Georgia info, Union Sapari, Article 42 of the Constitution, Georgia Democratic Initiative, Institute for Democracy Research, Atlantic Council of Georgia, Economic Policy Research Center, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (1TV, September 6, 2019).

10. Giorgi Gakharia: It is impossible to develop country positively with desperate opposition

Once again, I was convinced that the United National Movement and their branch "European Georgia" are one group, – Giorgi Gakharia, the candidate for the post of Georgian Prime Minister told reporters when assessing the meetings held in parliament today.

According to the candidate of the Prime Minister, the National Movement fled the hall and their branch "European Georgia" grabbed the microphone and did not allow him to answer questions (1TV, September 6, 2019).

11. Giorgi Gakharia: We must agree that our goal is to restore the country's territorial integrity without war

"I would like to emphasize that the occupied territories – this is a critically important issue for our internal and external security. We should all understand that it is impossible for us to talk about full-fledged civil, political, and even economic development of the country until the territorial integrity of our country is restored.

We have to agree on one thing that our goal is primarily to restore the country's territorial integrity without war. This is a critically important precondition, of course, we must use all other resources, "-Giorgi Gakharia said (1TV, September 7, 2019).

12. Giorgi Gakharia: Basic principle of our program will be action, work, efficiency and results

"We believe that each of our citizens evaluates our work based on concrete results and we want to speak more about specific cases instead of initiatives. This approach, I am convinced, will be supported by you as well", – Giorgi Gakharia addressed lawmakers at the ongoing sitting (1TV, September 7, 2019).

13. Parliament expressed confidence to new membership of government

Lawmakers expressed confidence to Giorgi Gakharia and the new membership of the government during the plenary session. New Cabinet was confirmed with 98 votes. The members of National Movement, European Georgia and the Alliance of Patriots have not taken part in voting.

The following ministers won the Parliament's confidence vote:

- Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia;
- Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure Maia Tskitishvili;
- Minister of Economics and Sustainable Development Natela Turnava;
- Minister of Foreign Affairs Davit Zalkaliani;
- > Finance Minister Ivane Machavariani;
- Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Mekheil Batiashvili;

- ➤ Minister of Environment Protection and Agriculture Levan Davitashvili.
- ➤ Minister of IDPs from Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Protection Ekaterine Tikaradze;
- Minister of Internal Affairs Vakhtang Gomelauri;
- Minister of Defence Irakli Gharibashvili;
- ➤ Minister of Justice Tea Tsulukiani:
- > State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality- Ketevan Tsikhelashvili (1TV, September 8, 2019).

Economy and Social Affairs

14. Why GEL Depreciates – Comments by National Bank President

"We noted from the very beginning that external shocks were expressed in information spread about flight ban and other supposed trade sanctions. As a result, society started thinking of expected exchange rate depreciation.

As a result of this information, part of citizens abstained from selling foreign currency, while another part intensified purchasing foreign currency. And the floating regime immediately reacts to similar shocks and absorbs them.

We see that amid the exchange rate devaluation, the demand for imports declines and the trade balance is improved more than expected. This factor balances the losses in tourism sector revenues.

Since the early indicator of trade balance is improved, this factor will make positive influence on future dynamics of the exchange rate", Koba Gvenetadze noted (CBW.GE, September 5, 2019).

Additional Information

